



### WRITING AND PLACING AN OP-ED

Most newspapers publish a page of opinion columns and letters opposite the editorial page; hence the term “opposite editorial,” or “op-ed.” Important ideas and issues are debated on the op-ed pages—an ideal place to raise awareness of *National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)* and to address important issues related to alcohol and drug use disorder treatment and recovery.

Writing an op-ed places you in the role of a columnist: expressing your views, while presenting the facts. Whether you use the sample provided at the end of this document or write your own, here are some tips for writing an op-ed:

- **Develop an outline.** It will help you stay focused and act as a reminder to cover key points.
- **Stick with one subject.** Choosing one theme will most effectively persuade the reader and drive home your point.
- **Express an opinion.** Be clear about your point of view from the beginning of the piece.
- **Provide background information.** Do not assume your readers are aware of the issue or your viewpoint, so paint a general picture of the issue or problem.
- **Support your position.** Statistics or study results add credibility—but take care not to bury your readers in numbers.
- **Use appropriate anecdotes.** Reference a recent news event, story, or personal anecdote to bring your piece to life.
- **Localize it.** Include local statistics about alcohol or drug use disorders. (A starting point for locating these statistics is the Single-State Agency Directory provided in the “Resources” section of this kit.) Refer to local treatment facilities to emphasize that alcohol and drug use disorders have a direct impact on your community.
- **Contact a *Recovery Month* planning partner from your local area to request a quotation.** You also can add in a relevant quote from another local authority or expert. A list of *Recovery Month* planning partners is included in the “Resources” section of this planning toolkit.
- **Keep your op-ed to a maximum of 400 words.** Be succinct—less is more.
- **Identify yourself.** At the end of your piece, include in italics your full name, daytime telephone number, e-mail address, and a brief description of who you are and what you do that makes you an expert on the subject.



### Submitting Your Op-Ed

Get the process started about two months before the kickoff of **Recovery Month**. Begin by calling your local newspaper to find out the name of the appropriate editor to contact. Establish a rapport with the identified editorial page member and brief this person about the **Recovery Month** celebration.

The paper may require that you send a written copy of the op-ed to the editorial page editor, and may specify a word limit for your piece. Submit your op-ed by e-mail, fax, or mail, depending on the newspaper's preference. Send an accompanying letter that explains who you are and provides some background information about **Recovery Month** and the topic. It should briefly, but clearly, state the issue and why your thoughts on the subject are important. Give the editorial staff a week or so to review the piece, and then call the publication to be sure the op-ed was received and to answer any questions.

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for **Recovery Month 2004** with SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official **Recovery Month** Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

We would like to know about your outreach efforts and community success stories during **Recovery Month**. Please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form enclosed in the kit. Directions are included on the form.

Please send any of your organization's **Recovery Month** promotional samples to:

Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, SAMHSA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockwall Building II, Rockville, MD 20857.

For additional **Recovery Month** materials, visit our Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP.



### [Sample Op-Ed—Approximately 390 Words]

#### The Path to Recovery Is Paved with Awareness and Action

Our community has made valiant efforts to help people with drug and alcohol problems. [City] is home to treatment facilities such as [list your local treatment facilities], which help people with alcohol and drug use disorders rejoin their families and the community as a whole.

But we cannot rest easy. Many people in our area still do not have access to treatment. More than [number] of [city]'s residents have alcohol or drug use disorders, yet only an estimated [number] have received treatment.

[As I know through my work at one of our local treatment facilities/From my own experience in seeking to find an appropriate treatment center/other explanation of your interest/role in alcohol and drug use disorders and treatment], I know that stigma and denial keep many people from seeking help, people in need are not always identified and directed to treatment, and programs may not be available to meet their needs.

To be most effective, treatment programs must be tailored to a person's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. But finding specialized treatment is not easy.

Nationwide, only 10.3 percent of people who needed treatment for an alcohol or drug problem in 2002 actually received it. Locally, we can help by increasing state, city, and municipal funding to support local treatment programs.

This month [your organization's name] is holding [list events/activities, such as a community forum/educational briefings for healthcare professionals, etc.]. These efforts coincide with the 15<sup>th</sup> annual observance of **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, a nationwide initiative each September supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

You can help, too. Support funding for our area's treatment facilities. Become a mentor to someone dealing with a drug or alcohol problem in your family. Urge your employer to offer an employee assistance program. Speak out in support of health care benefits for alcohol and drug use disorder treatment. And if you have already experienced the joys of recovery, consider sharing your experiences to encourage others.

By supporting treatment for those in need, we all can help more people find a pathway to recovery—and join the millions of others nationwide who are recovering from alcohol or drug use disorders and are leading full, rich, productive, and rewarding lives.

[Your full name] is [insert your title/affiliation or other role in the alcohol and drug use disorder field].

15TH ANNUAL

National Alcohol  
& Drug Addiction  
*Recovery Month*

SEPTEMBER 2004